

Community College Week

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE SERVING COMMUNITY, TECHNICAL AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

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around campus

Madam Akie Abe, the wife of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, made a special visit to LaGuardia Community College (N.Y.) on Sept. 25 to meet with students who are studying the country's language and culture and who recently participated in a study abroad program proposed by her husband. During her whirlwind hour-long visit, Madam Abe and Sumio Kusaka, the ambassador and consul general of Japan in New York, observed students in a Japanese language class and met with students who were invited last May by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Japan Foundation to take part in an all-expense-paid, 10-day study tour of Japan. Upon arriving on campus, the First Lady was warmly greeted by Gail O. Mellow, president of LaGuardia, and the students. While some students wore kimonos, others held up Japanese characters that spelled out, "Welcome to LaGuardia, Madam Akie Abe." All waved small Japanese flags. Mellow showed her two cherry trees planted in the college's courtyard that were gifts from the Consul General of Japan in the New York. The trees, which were presented to the college during the 100th anniversary of the planting of Japan's cherry blossom trees in the United States, are also symbols of the strong relationship between LaGuardia and the nation of Japan.



Seated among the students are, left to right: Gail O. Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College; Madam Akie Abe, Japan's First Lady; and Sumio Kusaka, the ambassador and consul general of Japan in New York.